Man or McCulloch-

The water, laughing and lapping, invited. The day was giddy May, and the invited young Lorens, moreover, owned all the folly normal to nineteen So altogether it would have been a miracle if things had gone exactly as they should. A proper young woman of course would have reckoned chances before baring her feet and dancing joyously in midstream, where the pebbles lay smoothly bedded in fine sand and gleaming jewel-wise wherever a sun ray struck through the ripples.

Lorena did not let herself remember that the ford was but fifty yards higher up or that this special shallow reach of the creek lay between the two lakes that gave the finest fishing. They were ot true lakes, of course-only water errors, still and deep, impounded by ms of the winter flood's building. brena did not love them. They were placid they reminded her somehow Johnny-and whatever did that put out of temper.

the loved glitter, motion, excitement. was ecstasy to her to dance all day ng and half the night after, footing as lightly, as featly, as wind blown distle seed. If only she could dance lone! But since that was out of the estion she naturally preferred parters who kept step and were nimble. chnny was neither, yet all the time had been engaged to him he had It it his right to say, if she did not ince with him, she must dance with ardly anybody else.

the very prince of partners, who was andsome and slender and light heartd, with money in both pockets and a trick of spending it with both hands. ohnny hated him, without reason so r as Lorena could see at least he we her no reason-only said, "If you goin' ever to belong to me, Lolie, must be barely civil to that fel-

chow the emphasis on the last always made Lorena shiver when recalled it. How could she help when Johnny was toward other folk soul of kindly justice? Still she had elt that he was unfair. If he really new anything he might let her know

If Johnny could have brought himself to tell her the break might not have come. But he was too proud and masterful for that. His wife must believe in him enough to understand that he had reasons for any and everything. Besides he was afraid of seeming envious and jealous of a man so much richer and better looking. Moreover, e did not really know much that ould be told categorically—it was Gore's general air and manner, conoined to words dropped here and there, that made Johnny certain he had no real reverence for anything feminine. A girl, any girl, was fair game to him. If she hadn't sense enough to look out for herself he was not bound to look out for her. Yet Gore was not distinctly vicious - rather, inordinately vain. He did not mean worse by womankind nd girlkind than to make love to them.

e finest girl alive If Lorena had known that! Unmowing it, she had thought a great nany times and a great many things the fascinating Granville in the ree months since the break. He had been away for two of them, and since he came home she had seen him only in crowds. But he had used his eyes so elequently as to set her heart wildly finttering. But, oddly enough, it had fluttered even more when by chance she had encountered Johnny, in his working clothes, driving his wagon to

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They had barely nodded to each othr, and she had ridden fast afterward, out not fast enough to get away from sense that Johnny, old Johnny, although his face was impassive, had urned to look after her as long as she

Today she was not thinking of himhardly even of Granville. Wading was such pure joy. The water came above her ankles. She lifted her skirts lightn both hands and balanced to her shadow upon the rippling stream. Such a funny shadow dancing grotesquely even when she stood still.

Rapt in contemplation of it, she did not hear footsteps or anything until a throaty, chuckling voice cried: "Oh, ho! A mermaid! Gore, if the variety is indigenous, understand, I shall settle in your neighborhood just as soon as can buy a place."

Lorena flushed scarlet. She let fall her skirts heedless of water-heedless, indeed, of anything but escape. There were men on either bank, also one in wading approaching her midstream. Gore was the farthest of them-a Gore he had never seen. He looked her er as though she were a part, a curiis part, of the landscape with which had no sort of acquaintance.

It was the man in wading who had oken. He was striding on toward his rod over his shoulder, a broad upon his flat, red face. Her sunnet, her faded print frock, above her present case, had nearly made believe her some holdenish milk-

rather than mermaid. idn't I tell you fellows the finest were here in the shallows?" he beled at the men on the bank. "Never made such a catch," he added, ing to fling an arm about Lorena's

evaded him, springing to one and trying to gain the bank, but portsmen there set up a laughing t which warned her not to trust

them. Desperately she fied upstream, cutting her feet on sharp stones, but never faltering. It was not easy to run against the current-the rock bottom was slippery in places and her wet skirt hampered her terribly.

Still she kept out of reach until she was twenty yards of the ford. The flat faced man, laughing and panting after her, caught her there and said as he gave her a resounding kiss: "Pen my soul, Undine, it was worth it. I haven't had such a lark since I was a

Lorena broke from him, crying wildby: "Granville! Mr. Gore! Kill this

At that the men laughed louder than ever. Granville had discreetly disappeared: He was sorry for Lorena; also angry with her, even angrier than with his friend of the flat, red face. There were millions back of the flat, red face millions that might mean much to Gore's future. Was he to risk their help, to invite everlasting chaff, to make himself the butt of the grill rooms next time he was in town, by championship of a girl, a silly country girl, who should have known better than to put herself in such case?

Mullen, he of the flat, red face, was not a bad sort, only full of uncouth spirits. Lorena would come to ho harm. And if she had sense enough to keep her mouth shut he (Gore) would see to it that she was handsomely made up to for her present fright. But of course he could not agknowledge her as an acquaintance when she looked such a guy and had let herself get caught in such a plight.

Lorens, noting his absence, stumbled blindly toward the bank and half fell upon it, covering her eyes with both hands. Mullen scrambled out beside her and tried to lift her to her feet, the rest jeering him, pretending to say things aside and singing in cracked chorus, "Where is my wandering boy?"

They were laughing so loud, watching so intently. Johnny fell upon them like a thunderbolt from blue skies. Johnny was still in working clothes he had, in fact, started to the blacksmith's shop in a mad hurry in hope of getting a dulled plow point sharpened. So he had come to the ford in the very nick of time to see that a woman was in need of help and to rush to give it.

"Gentlemen." Johnny's voice cut like ice, "you must show me your warrant for taking a prisoner. Unless you do"-He stopped short there, his face white, his eyes two points of flame. Even yet he did not know, but a second later Lorena was beside him, clinging to him, burying her face in his rough sleeve, and sobbing out: "Johnny! Save me! Take me away! Don't stop to fight them-only take me and go!" "Not yet," Johnny said, putting her

gently away. The events of the next five minutes are better left unchronicled. Suffice it that Mr. Granville Gore and his sportsmen friends from the city went away on the night train, at least two of the visitors carrying beautiful black eyes. As to how the eyes had been achieved there was discreet silence. But when in the fall Lorena and Johnny were married there came to the bride a chest of massive silver, along with an unsigned note which ran: "Please accept this in token of forgiveness. Remember, you owe me something-in that I gave you occasion to find out the difference there is between a man

Lorena was for sending it back, but Johnny laughed and said: "Mullen is right. He is a man. You can drub a en ride away. Marry! Not he! Not man into decency, but a mouse always runs away."

"And I hate mice of every sort," Lorena added with a pensive smile.

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"Putting up" at what seemed to be the best hotel, he ate his dinner, then strolled into the office and proceeded in a careless way to interrogate the

"In one way and another there's good jag of business going on here."

"Middling." "Is there much litigation here?"

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Dated May 15, 1906.

MARTIN J. SYNNOFT.

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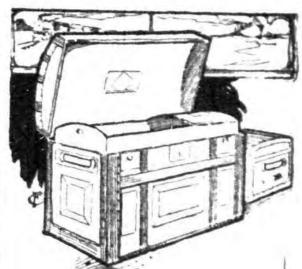
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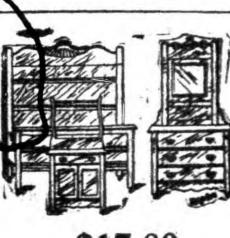
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